



**Waukesha County
Public Health Division
Fact Sheet**

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)

What is Pink Eye?

Pink Eye, also called conjunctivitis, is an infection of the inside of the eyelid. It can be caused by bacterial or viral infections.

Who gets Pink Eye?

Anyone is at risk to develop Pink Eye, but children of pre-school and school age appear to be most susceptible. Pink Eye may also develop in children who have an ear infection.

How is Pink Eye spread?

Pink Eye is spread through direct or indirect contact with the discharge that comes from the eye or upper respiratory system, or it can be spread if any of the following have been contaminated: fingers, clothing, towels, shared eye makeup/makeup applicators, and multiple use eye solutions.

What are the symptoms of Pink Eye?

Pink Eye may affect one or both eyes. Symptoms include red, irritated eyes, with swollen eyelids and pink conjunctiva and a burning or scratchy feeling. Eyes are typically draining, with a pus-like coating on the eyelashes or at the corner of the eye. Light sensitivity may be present. Pink Eye may be associated with cold-like symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is between 24 and 72 hours for bacterial infections and 5 to 12 days or longer for viral infections.

When and for how long is a person able to spread Pink Eye?

Pink Eye is usually contagious while inflammation and drainage are present. Exclude from school or daycare until there is no longer any yellow or green drainage in the eyes (usually 24 hours after treatment is begun in the case of a bacterial infection)

Is there a treatment for Pink Eye?

Those with symptoms of Pink Eye should be evaluated by their physician to determine if treatment is appropriate.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Pink Eye?

To prevent the spread of Pink Eye, wash hands frequently, especially after contact with an infected person. Pillows, wash clothes, and towels should not be shared.